

The Bancroft Library

University of California • Berkeley

GIFT OF

THE FRIENDS OF THE BANCROFT LIBRARY



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

THE
BADMINTON MAGAZINE
December 1898

SOME EXPERIENCES OF AN IRISH R.M.

BY E. C. SOMERVILLE AND MARTIN ROSS

NO. III.—IN THE CURRANHILTY COUNTRY

It is hardly credible that I should have been induced to depart from my usual walk of life by a creature so uninspiring as the grey horse that I bought from Flurry Knox for 25*l*.

Perhaps it was the monotony of being questioned by every other person with whom I had five minutes' conversation, as to when I was coming out with the hounds, and being further informed that in the days when Captain Browne, the late Coast-guard officer, had owned the grey, there was not a fence between this and Mallow big enough to please them. At all events, there came an epoch-making day when I mounted the Quaker and presented myself at a meet of Mr. Knox's hounds. It is my belief that six out of every dozen people who go out hunting are disagreeably conscious of a nervous system, and two out of the six are in what is brutally called 'a blue funk.' I was not in a blue funk, but I was conscious not only of a nervous system, but of the anatomical fact that I possessed large, round legs, handsome in their way, even admirable in their proper sphere, but singularly ill adapted for adhering to the slippery surfaces of a saddle. By a fatal intervention of Providence, the sport, on this my first day in the hunting-field, was such as I could have enjoyed from a bath-chair. The hunting-field was, on this

occasion, a relative term, implying long stretches of unfenced moorland and bog, anything, in fact, save a field; the hunt itself might also have been termed a relative one, being mainly composed of Mr. Knox's relations in all degrees of cousinhood. It was a day when frost and sunshine combined went to one's head like iced champagne; the distant sea looked like the Mediterranean, and for four sunny hours the Knox relatives and I followed nine couple of hounds at a tranquil footpace along the hills, our progress mildly enlivened by one or two scrambles in the shape of jumps. At three o'clock I jogged home, and felt within me the newborn desire to brag to Peter Cadogan of the Quaker's doings, as I dismounted rather stiffly in my own yard.

I little thought that the result would be that three weeks later I should find myself in a railway carriage at an early hour of a December morning, in company with Flurry Knox and four or five of his clan, journeying towards an unknown town, named Drumcurran, with an appropriate number of horses in boxes behind us and a van full of hounds in front. Mr. Knox's hounds were on their way, by invitation, to have a day in the country of their neighbours, the Curranhilty Harriers, and with amazing fatuity I had allowed myself to be cajoled into joining the party. A northerly shower was striking in long spikes on the glass of the window, the atmosphere of the carriage was blue with tobacco smoke, and my feet, in a pair of new butcher boots, had sunk into a species of Arctic sleep.

'Well, you got my letter about the dance at the hotel to-night?' said Flurry Knox, breaking off a whispered conversation with his amateur whip, Dr. Jerome Hickey, and sitting down beside me. 'And we're to go out with the Harriers to-day, and they've a sure fox for our hounds to-morrow. I tell you you'll have the best fun ever you had. It's a great country to ride. Fine honest banks, that you can come racing at anywhere you like.'

Dr. Hickey, a saturnine young man, with a long nose and a black torpedo beard, returned to his pocket the lancet with which he had been trimming his nails.

'They're like the Tipperary banks,' he said; 'you climb down nine feet and you fall the rest.'

It occurred to me that the Quaker and I would most probably fall all the way, but I said nothing.

'I hear Tomsy Flood has a good horse this season,' resumed Flurry.

'Then it's not the one you sold him,' said the Doctor.

'I'll take my oath it's not,' said Flurry with a grin. 'I believe he has it in for me still over that one.'

Dr. Jerome's moustache went up under his nose and showed his white teeth.

'Small blame to him! when you sold him a mare that was wrong of both her hind legs. Do you know what he did, Major Yeates? The mare was lame going into the fair, and he took the two hind-shoes off her and told poor Flood she kicked them off in the box, and that was why she was going tender, and he was so drunk he believed him.'

The conversation here deepened into trackless obscurities of horse-dealing. I took out my stylograph pen, and finished a letter to Philippa, with a feeling that it would probably be my last.

The next step in the day's enjoyment consisted in trotting in cavalcade through the streets of Drumcurran, with another northerly shower descending upon us, the mud splashing in my face, and my feet coming torturingly to life. Every man and boy in the town ran with us; the Harriers were somewhere in the tumult ahead, and the Quaker began to pull and hump his back ominously. I arrived at the meet considerably heated, and found myself one of some thirty or forty riders, who, with traps and bicycles and footpeople, were jammed in a narrow, muddy road. We were late, and a move was immediately made across a series of grass fields, all considerably furnished with gates. There was a glacial gleam of sunshine, and people began to turn down the collars of their coats. As they spread over the field I observed that Mr. Knox was no longer riding with old Captain Handcock, the Master of the Harriers, but had attached himself to a square-shouldered young lady with effective coils of dark hair and a grey habit. She was riding a fidgetty black mare with great decision and a not disagreeable swagger.

It was at about this moment that the hounds began to run, fast and silently, and every one began to canter.

'This is nothing at all,' said Dr. Hickey, thundering alongside of me on a huge young chestnut; 'there might have been a hare here last week, or a red herring this morning. I wouldn't care if we only got what'd warm us. For the matter of that, I'd as soon hunt a cat as a hare.'

I was already getting quite enough to warm me. The Quaker's respectable grey head had twice disappeared between his forelegs in a brace of most unsettling bucks, and all my experiences at the riding school at Sandhurst did not prepare me

for the sensation of jumping a briary wall with a heavy drop into a lane so narrow that each horse had to turn at right angles as he landed. I did not so turn, but saved myself from entire disgrace by a timely clutch at the mane. We scrambled out of the lane over a pile of stones and furze bushes, and at the end of the next field were confronted by a tall, stone-faced bank. Every one, always excepting myself, was riding with that furious valour which is so conspicuous when neighbouring hunts meet, and the leading half-dozen charged the obstacle at steeplechase speed. I caught a glimpse of the young lady in the grey habit, sitting square and strong as her mare topped the bank, with Flurry and the redoubtable Mr. Tomsy Flood riding on either hand; I followed in their wake, with a blind confidence in the Quaker, and none at all in myself. He refused it. I suppose it was in token of affection and gratitude that I fell upon his neck: at all events, I had reason to respect his judgment, as, before I had recovered myself, the hounds were straggling back into the field by a gap lower down.

It finally appeared that the hounds could do no more with the line they had been hunting, and we proceeded to jog interminably, I knew not whither. During this unpleasant process Flurry Knox bestowed on me many items of information, chiefly as to the pangs of jealousy he was inflicting on Mr. Flood by his attentions to the lady in the grey habit, Miss 'Bobbie' Bennett.

'She'll have all old Handcock's money one of these days—she's his niece, y' know—and she's a good girl to ride, but she's not as young as she was ten years ago. You'd be looking at a chicken a long time before you thought of her! She might take Tomsy some day if she can't do any better.' He stopped and looked at me with a gleam in his eye. 'Come on, and I'll introduce you to her!'



THE REDOUBTABLE MR. TOMSY FLOOD

Before, however, this privilege could be mine, the whole cavalcade was stopped by a series of distant yells, which apparently conveyed information to the hunt, though to me they only suggested a Red Indian scalping his enemy. The yells travelled rapidly nearer, and a young man with a scarlet face and a long stick sprang upon the fence, and explained that he and Patsy Lorry were after chasing a hare two miles down out of the hill above, and ne'er a dog nor a one with them but themselves, and she was lying, bet out, under a bush, and Patsy Lorry was minding her until the hounds would come. I had a vision of the humane Patsy Lorry fanning the hare with his hat, but apparently nobody else found the fact unusual. The hounds were hurried into the fields, the hare was again spurred into action, and I was again confronted with the responsibilities of the chase. After the first five minutes I had discovered several facts about the Quaker. If the bank was above a certain height he refused it irrevocably, if it accorded with his ideas he got his fore-legs over and ploughed through the rest of it on his stifle-joints, or, if a gripe made this inexpedient, he remained poised on top till the fabric crumbled under his weight. In the case of walls he butted them down with his knees, or squandered them with his hind-legs. These operations took time, and the leaders of the hunt streamed further and further away over the crest of a hill, while the Quaker pursued at the equable gallop of a horse in the Bayeux Tapestry.

I began to perceive that I had been adopted as a pioneer by a small band of followers, who, as one of their number candidly explained, 'liked to have some one ahead of them to soften the banks,' and accordingly waited respectfully till the Quaker had made the rough places smooth, and taken the raw edge off the walls. They, in their turn, showed me alternative routes when the obstacle proved above the Quaker's limit; thus, in ignoble confederacy, I and the off-scourings of the Curranhilty hunt pursued our way across some four miles of country. When at length we parted it was with extreme regret on both sides. A river crossed our course, with boggy banks pitted deep with the hoof-marks of our forerunners; I suggested it to the Quaker, and discovered that Nature had not in vain endued him with the hindquarters of the hippopotamus. I presume the others had jumped it; the Quaker, with abysmal flounderings, walked through and heaved himself to safety on the farther bank. It was the dividing of the ways. My friendly company turned aside as one man, and I was left with the world before me, and no guide save

the hoof-marks in the grass. These presently led me to a road, on the other side of which was a bank, that was at once added to the Quaker's black list. The rain had again begun to fall heavily, and was soaking in about my elbows ; I suddenly asked myself



HE REMAINED POISED ON TOP TILL THE FABRIC CRUMBLED UNDER HIS WEIGHT

why, in Heaven's name, I should go any further. No adequate reason occurred to me, and I turned in what I believed to be the direction of Drumcurran.

I rode on for possibly two or three miles without seeing a human being, until, from the top of a hill I descried a solitary

lady rider. I started in pursuit. The rain kept blurring my eyeglass, but it seemed to me that the rider was a schoolgirl with hair hanging down her back, and that her horse was a trifle lame. I pressed on to ask my way, and discovered that I had been privileged to overtake no less a person than Miss Bobbie Bennett.

My question as to the route led to information of a varied character. Miss Bennett was going that way herself; her mare had given her what she called 'a toss and a half,' whereby she had strained her arm and the mare her shoulder, her habit had been torn, and she had lost all her hairpins.

'I'm an awful object,' she concluded; 'my hair's the plague of my life out hunting! I declare I wish to goodness I was bald!'

I struggled to the level of the occasion with an appropriate protest. She had really very brilliant grey eyes, and her complexion was undeniable. Philippa has since explained to me that it is a mere male fallacy that any woman can look well with her hair down her back, but I have always maintained that Miss Bobbie Bennett, with the rain glistening on her dark tresses, looked uncommonly well.

'I shall never get it dry for the dance to-night,' she complained.

'I wish I could help you,' said I.

'Perhaps you've got a hairpin or two about you!' said she, with a glance that had certainly done great execution before now.

I disclaimed the possession of any such tokens, but volunteered to go and look for some at a neighbouring cottage.

The cottage door was shut, and my knockings were answered by a stupefied-looking elderly man. Conscious of my own absurdity, I asked him if he had any hairpins.

'I didn't see a hare this week!' he responded in a slow bellow.

'Hairpins!' I roared; 'has your wife any hairpins?'

'She has not.' Then, as an after-thought, 'She's dead these ten years.'

At this point a young woman emerged from the cottage, and, with many coy grins, plucked from her own head some half-dozen hairpins, crooked, and grey with age, but still hairpins, and as such well worth my shilling. I returned with my spoil to Miss Bennett, only to be confronted with a fresh difficulty. The arm that she had strained was too stiff to raise to her head.

Miss Bobbie turned her handsome eyes upon me. 'It's no use,' she said plaintively, 'I can't do it!'

I looked up and down the road ; there was no one in sight. I offered to do it for her.

Miss Bennett's hair was long, thick, and soft ; it was also slippery with rain. I twisted it conscientiously, as if it were a hay rope, until Miss Bennett, with an irrepressible shriek, told me it would break off. I coiled the rope with some success, and proceeded to nail it to her head with the hairpins. At all the most critical points one, if not both, of the horses moved ; hairpins were driven home into Miss Bennett's skull, and were with difficulty plucked forth again ; in fact, a more harrowing performance can hardly be imagined, but Miss Bennett bore it with the heroism of a pin-cushion.

I was putting the finishing touches to the coiffure when some sound made me look round, and I beheld at a distance of some fifty yards the entire hunt approaching us at a foot pace. I lost my head, and, instead of continuing my task, I dropped the last hairpin as if it were red-hot, and kicked the Quaker away to the far side of the road, thus, if it were possible, giving the position away a shade more generously.

There were fifteen riders in the group that overtook us, and fourteen of them, including the Whip, were grinning from ear to ear ; the fifteenth was Mr. Tomsy Flood, and he showed no sign of appreciation. He shoved his horse past me and up to Miss Bennett, his red moustache bristling, truculence in every outline of his heavy shoulders. His green coat was muddy, and his hat had a cave in it. Things had apparently gone ill with him.

Flurry's witticisms held out for about two miles and a half ; I do not give them, because they were not amusing, but they all dealt ultimately with the animosity that I, in common with himself, should henceforth have to fear from Mr. Flood.

'Oh, he's a holy terror !' he said conclusively ; 'he was riding the tails off the hounds to-day to best me. He was near killing me twice. We had some words about it, I can tell you. I very near took my whip to him. Such a bull-rider of a fellow I never saw ! He wouldn't so much as stop to catch Bobbie Bennett's horse when I picked her up, he was riding so jealous. His own girl, mind you ! And such a crumpler as she got too ! I declare she knocked a groan out of the road when she struck it !'

'She doesn't seem so much hurt ?' I said.

'Hurt !' said Flurry, flicking casually at a hound. 'You couldn't hurt that one unless you took a hatchet to her !'

The rain had reached a pitch that put further hunting out of the question, and we bumped home at that intolerable pace



I WAS JUST PUTTING THE FINISHING TOUCHES TO THE COIFFURE



known as a 'hounds' jog.' I spent the remainder of the afternoon over a fire in my bedroom in the Royal Hotel, Drumcurran, official letters to write having mercifully provided me with an excuse for seclusion, while the bar and the billiard-room hummed below, and the Quaker's three-cornered gallop wreaked its inevitable revenge upon my person. As this process continued, and I became proportionately embittered, I asked myself, not for the first time, what Philippa would say when introduced to my present circle of acquaintances.

I have already mentioned that a dance was to take place at the hotel, given, as far as I could gather, by the leading lights of the Curranhilty Hunt. A less jocund guest than the wreck who at the pastoral hour of nine crept stiffly down to 'chase the glowing hours with flying feet' could hardly have been encountered. The dance was held in the coffee-room, and a conspicuous object outside the door was a saucer bath full of something that looked like flour.

'Rub your feet in that,' said Flurry; 'that's French chalk! They hadn't time to do the floor, so they hit on this dodge.'

I complied with this encouraging direction, and followed him into the room. Dancing had already begun, and the first sight that met my eyes was Miss Bennett in a yellow dress waltzing with Mr. Tomsy Flood. She looked very handsome, and, in spite of her accident, she was getting round the sticky floor and her still more sticky partner with the swing of a racing cutter. Her eye caught mine immediately, and with confidence. Clearly our acquaintance that, in the space of twenty minutes, had blossomed tropically into hair-dressing, was not to be allowed to wither. Nor was I myself allowed to wither. Men, known and unknown, plied me with partners, till my shirt cuff was black with names, and the number of dances stretched away into the blue distance of to-morrow morning. The music was supplied by the organist of the church, who played with religious unction and at the pace of a processional hymn. I put forth into the *mêlée* with a junior Bennett, inferior in calibre to Miss Bobbie, but a strong goer, and, I fear, made but a sorry *début* in the eyes of Drumcurran. At every other moment I bumped into the unforeseen orbits of those who reversed, and of those who walked their partners backwards down the room with faces of ineffable supremacy. Being unskilled in these intricacies of an elder civilisation, the younger Miss Bennett fared but ingloriously at my hands; the music pounded interminably on, until the heel of Mr. Flood put a period to our sufferings.

'The nasty dirty filthy brute!' shrieked the younger Miss Bennett in a single breath; 'he's torn the gown off my back!'

She whirled me to the cloak-room; we parted, mutually unregretted, at its door, and by, I fear, common consent, evaded our second dance together.

Many, many times during the evening I asked myself why I did not go to bed. Perhaps it was the remembrance that my bed was situated some ten feet above the piano in a direct line; but, whatever was the reason, the night wore on and found me still working my way down my shirt cuff. I sat out as much as possible, and found my partners to be, as a body, pretty, talkative, and ill-dressed, and during the evening I had many and varied opportunities of observing the rapid progress of Mr. Knox's flirtation with Miss Bobbie Bennett. From No. 4 to No. 8 they were invisible; that they were behind a screen in the commercial-room might be inferred from Mr. Flood's thunder-cloud presence in the passage outside.

At No. 9 the young lady emerged for one of her dances with me; it was a barn dance, and particularly trying to my momentarily stiffening muscles; but Miss Bobbie, whether in dancing or sitting out, went in for 'the rigour of the game.' She was in as hard condition as one of her uncle's hounds, and for a full fifteen minutes I capered and swooped beside her, larding the lean earth as I went, and replying but spasmodically to her even flow of conversation.

'That'll take the stiffness out of you!' she exclaimed, as the organist slowed down reverentially to a conclusion. 'I had a bet with Flurry Knox over that dance. He said you weren't up to my weight at the pace!'

I led her forth to the refreshment table, and was watching with awe her fearless consumption of claret cup that I would not have touched for a sovereign, when Flurry, with a partner on his arm, strolled past us.

'Well, you won the gloves, Miss Bobbie!' he said. 'Don't you wish you may get them!'

'Gloves without the *g*, Mr. Knox!' replied Miss Bennett, in a voice loud enough to reach the end of the passage, where Mr. Thomas Flood was burying his nose in a very brown whiskey-and-soda.

'Your hair's coming down!' retorted Flurry. 'Ask Major Yeates if he can spare you a few hairpins!'

Swifter than lightning Miss Bennett hurled a macaroon at her retreating foe, missed him, and subsided laughing on to a

sofa. I mopped my brow and took my seat beside her, wondering how much longer I could live up to the social exigencies of Drumcurran.

Miss Bennett, however, proved excellent company. She told me artfully, and inch by inch, all that Mr. Flood had said to her on the subject of my hair-dressing; she admitted that she had,



MR. FLOOD'S THUNDERCLOUD PRESENCE

as a punishment, cut him out of three dances and given them to Flurry Knox. When I remarked that in fairness they should have been given to me, she darted a very attractive glance at me, and pertinently observed that I had not asked for them.

As steals the dawn into a fevered room,
And says 'Be of good cheer, the day is born!'

so did the rumour of supper pass among the chaperons, male and

female. It was obviously due to a sense of the fitness of things that Mrs. Bennett was apportioned to me, and I found myself in the gratifying position of heading with her the procession to supper. My impressions of Mrs. Bennett are few but salient. She wore an apple-green satin dress and filled it tightly; rightly mistrusting the hotel supper, she had imported sandwiches and cake in a pocket-handkerchief, and, warmed by two glasses of sherry, she made me the recipient of the remarkable confidence that she had but two back teeth in her head, but, thank God, they met. When, with the other starving men, I fell upon the remains of the feast, I regretted that I had declined her offer of a sandwich.

Of the remainder of the evening I am unable to give a detailed account. Let it not for one instant be imagined that I had looked upon the wine of the Royal Hotel when it was red, or, indeed, any other colour; as a matter of fact, I had espied an inconspicuous corner in the entrance hall, and there I first smoked a cigarette, and subsequently sank into troubled sleep. Through my dreams I was aware of the measured pounding of the piano, of the clatter of glasses at the bar, of wheels in the street, and then, more clearly, of Flurry's voice assuring Miss Bennett that if she'd only wait for another dance he'd get the R.M. out of bed to do her hair for her—then again oblivion.

At some later period I was dropping down a chasm on the Quaker's back, and landing with a shock; I was twisting his mane into a chignon, when he turned round his head and caught my arm in his teeth. I awoke with the dew of terror on my forehead, to find Miss Bennett leaning over me in a scarlet cloak with a hood over her head, and shaking me by my coat sleeve.

'Major Yeates,' she began at once in a hurried whisper, 'I want you to find Flurry Knox, and tell him there's a plan to feed his hounds at six o'clock this morning so as to spoil their hunting!'

'How do you know?' I asked, jumping up.

'My little brother told me. He came in with us to-night to see the dance, and he was hanging round in the stables, and he heard one of the men telling another there was a dead mule in an outhouse in Bride's Alley, all cut up ready to give to Mr. Knox's hounds.'

'But why shouldn't they get it?' I asked in sleepy stupidity.

'Is it fill them up with an old mule just before they're going out hunting?' flashed Miss Bennett. 'Hurry and tell Mr. Knox; don't let Tomsy Flood see you telling him—or any one else.'

‘Oh, then it’s Mr. Flood’s game?’ I said, grasping the situation at length.

‘It is,’ said Miss Bennett, suddenly turning scarlet; ‘he’s a disgrace! I’m ashamed of him! I’m done with him!’

I resisted a strong disposition to shake Miss Bennett by the hand.

‘I can’t wait,’ she continued. ‘I made my mother drive back a mile—she doesn’t know a thing about it—I said I’d left my purse in the cloak-room. Good-night! Don’t tell a soul but Flurry!’

She was off, and upon my incapable shoulders rested the responsibility of the enterprise.

It was past four o’clock, and the last bars of the last waltz were being played. At the bar a knot of men, with Flurry in their midst, were tossing ‘Odd man out’ for a bottle of champagne. Flurry was not in the least drunk, a circumstance worthy of remark in his present company, and I got him out into the hall and unfolded my tidings. The light of battle lit in his eye as he listened.

‘I knew by Tomsy he was shaping for mischief,’ he said coolly; ‘he’s taken as much liquor as’d stiffen a tinker, and he’s only half-drunk this minute. Hold on till I get Jerome Hickey and Charlie Knox—they’re sober; I’ll be back in a minute.’

I was not present at the council of war thus hurriedly convened; I was merely informed when they returned that we were all to ‘hurry on.’ My best evening pumps have never recovered the subsequent proceedings. They, with my swelled and aching feet inside them, were raced down one filthy lane after another, until, somewhere on the outskirts of Drumcurran, Flurry pushed open the gate of a yard and went in. It was nearly five o’clock on that raw December morning; low down in the sky a hazy moon shed a diffused light; all the surrounding houses were still and dark. At our footsteps an angry bark or two came from inside the stable.

‘Whisht!’ said Flurry, ‘I’ll say a word to them before I open the door.’

At his voice a chorus of hysterical welcome arose; without more delay he flung open the stable door, and instantly we were all knee deep in a rush of hounds. There was not a moment lost. Flurry started at a quick run out of the yard with the whole pack pattering at his heels. Charley Knox vanished; Dr. Hickey and I followed the hounds, splashing into puddles and hobbling over patches of broken stones, till we left the town behind and hedges arose on either hand.

'Here's the house!' said Flurry, stopping short at a low entrance gate; 'many's the time I've been here when his father had it; it'll be a queer thing if I can't find a window I can manage, and the old cook he has is as deaf as the dead.'

He and Dr. Hickey went in at the gate with the hounds; I hesitated ignobly in the mud.

'This isn't an R.M.'s job,' said Flurry in a whisper, closing the gate in my face; 'you stole a horse with me, but you'd best keep clear of house-breaking.'

I accepted his advice, but I may admit that before I turned for home a sash was gently raised, a light had sprung up in one of the lower windows, and I heard Flurry's voice saying, 'Over, over, over!' to his hounds.

There seemed to me to be no interval at all between these events and the moment when I woke in bright sunlight to find Dr. Hickey standing by my bedside in a red coat with a tall glass in his hand.

'It's nine o'clock,' he said. 'I'm just after waking Flurry Knox. There wasn't one stirring in the hotel till I went down and pulled the "boots" from under the kitchen table! It's well for us the meet's in the town; and, by-the-bye, your grey horse has four legs on him the size of bolsters this morning; he won't be fit to go out, I'm afraid. Drink this anyway, you're in the want of it.'

Dr. Hickey's eyelids were rather pink, but his hand was as steady as a rock. The whiskey-and-soda was singularly untempting.

'What happened last night?' I asked eagerly as I gulped it.

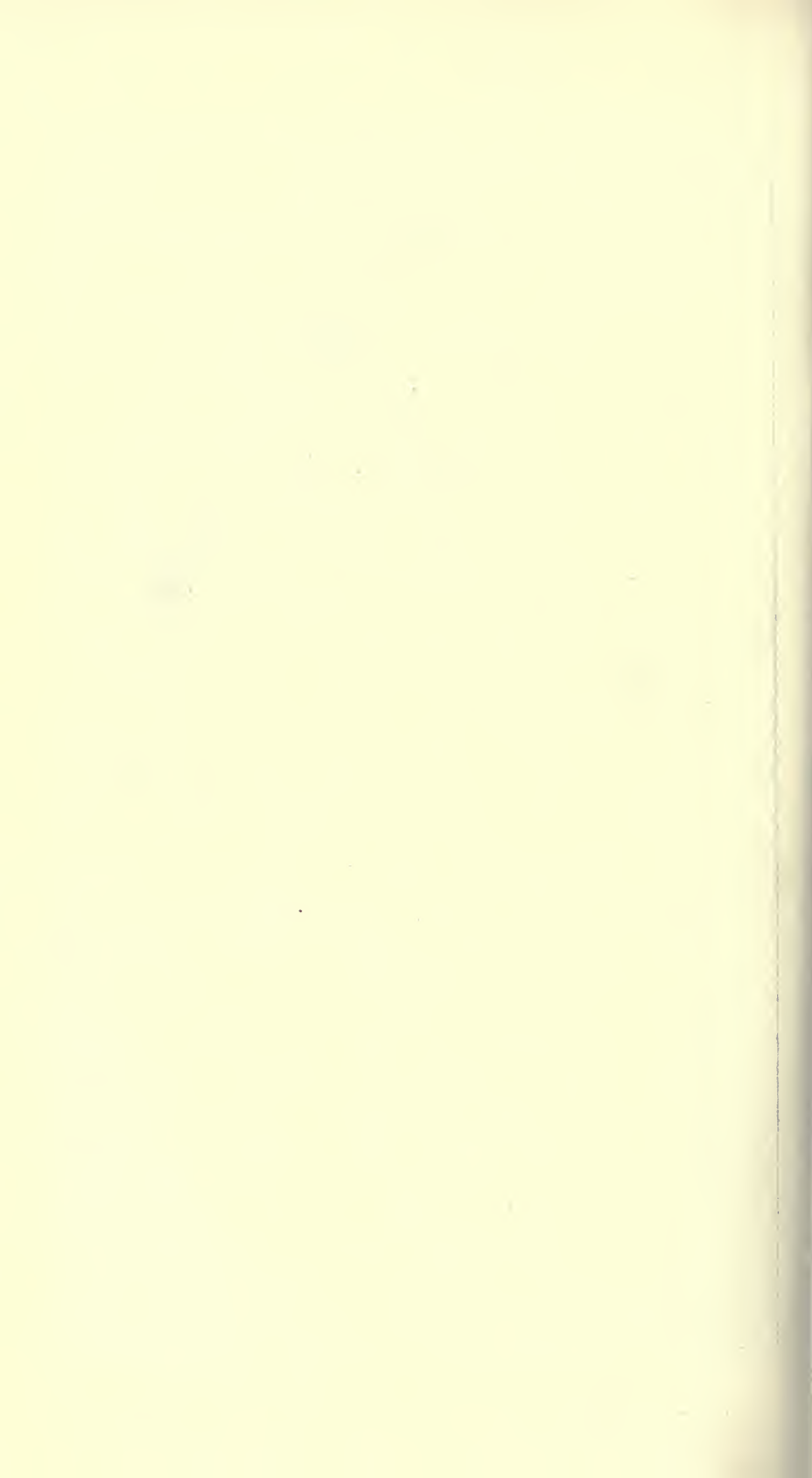
'Oh, it all went off very nicely, thank you,' said Hickey, twisting his black beard to a point. 'We benched as many of the hounds in Flood's bed as'd fit, and we shut the lot into the room. We had them just comfortable when we heard his latchkey below at the door.' He broke off and began to snigger.

'Well?' I said, sitting bolt upright.

'Well, he got in at last, and he lit a candle then. That took him five minutes. He was pretty tight. We were looking at him over the banisters until he started to come up, and according as he came up, we went on up the top flight. He stood admiring his candle for a while on the landing, and we wondered he didn't hear the hounds snuffing under the door. He opened it then, and, on the minute, three of them bolted out between his legs.' Dr. Hickey again paused to indulge in Mephistophelian laughter. 'Well, you know,' he went on, 'when a man in poor Tomsy's condition sees six dogs jumping out of his bed he's apt



A LIGHT HAD SPRUNG UP IN ONE OF THE LOWER WINDOWS
NO. XLI. VOL. VII.



to make a wrong diagnosis. He gave a roar, and pitched the candlestick at them, and ran for his life downstairs, and all the hounds after him. "Gone away!" screeches that devil Flurry, pelting downstairs on top of them in the dark. I believe I screeched too.'



'Good heavens!' I gasped, 'I was well out of that!'

'Well, you were,' admitted the Doctor. 'However, Tomsy bested them in the dark, and he got to ground in the pantry. I heard the cups and saucers go as he slammed the door on the hounds' noses, and the minute he was in Flurry turned the key on him. "They're real dogs, Tomsy, my buck!" says Flurry, just to quiet him; and there we left him.'

'Was he hurt?' I asked, conscious of the triviality of the question.

'Well, he lost his brush,' replied Dr. Hickey. 'Old Merrylegs tore the coat-tails off him; we got them on the floor when we struck a light; Flurry has them to nail on his kennel door. Charley Knox had a pleasant time too,' he went on, 'with the man that brought the barrow-load of meat to the stable. We picked out the tastiest bits and arranged them round Flood's breakfast table for him. They smelt very nice. Well, I'm delaying you with my talking——'

Flurry's hounds had the run of the season that day. I saw it admirably throughout—from Miss Bennett's pony cart. She drove extremely well, in spite of her strained arm.

PR 6037
S63 S6
v. 7



